TL 3607

Prime Minister
Wellington
New Zealand

26 March 1985

Mr H Bruhns
East Timor Independence Centre
P O Box 9716
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Bruhns

Thank you for your letter of 21 March 1985 requesting an appointment for Mr Jose Ramas Horta during his visit to New Zealand this week.

While the Government does not condone the manner in which East Timor was incorporated into the Indonesian Republic we accept that the process cannot be reversed. The United Nations has been occupied by the problem of East Timor since it first arose, but for the past two years, consideration by the General Assembly has been deferred. There seems to be general agreement among United Nations members that the problem is most likely to be resolved through the Secretary-General's mediation efforts, and New Zealand whole-heartedly supports his endeavours.

Quite simply, I do not believe that keeping alive the issue of independence will do anything to help the East Timorese people. The Government's main concern is that there should be an improvement in living conditions in East Timor. In my view we can best help the people of East Timor through private discussions with the Indonesian authorities. The Government is also giving careful consideration to the provision of development assistance to East Timor.

It is not the Government's policy to restrict debate on issues of public concern and Mr Horta is at liberty to come to New Zealand to talk with CORSO, Red Cross and other non-governmental organisations. I am not prepared however to accord him the degree of official recognition that a formal call on me or other members of Cabinet would give to him.

Yours sincerely

David Lange

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